DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 239 CS 209 027

AUTHOR Fleener, Nickieann
TITLE Striding Out in the Opposite Direction: The Journalism Career of George Samuel Schuyler, Iconoclast.
PUB DATE Aug 85
NOTE 40p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (68th, Memphis, TN, Document contains small print throughout.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Careers; *Journalism; Mass Media; Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *Schuyler (George Samuel)

ABSTRACT

Written in a biographical framework, an overview of George Samuel Schuyler's life and his career in journalism is presented in this paper. The preparation that Schuyler had for his career, the positions within journalism he held, and the major writing projects he undertook are discussed. The question of whether there is anything unique or significant about his journalistic endeavors or not is explored. The paper concludes that the length, depth, and nature of Schuyler's journalism career offer rich territory for scholarly exploration. (DF)

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# Striding Out In The Opposite Direction!

## The Journalism Career of George Samuel Schuyler, Iconoclast

By

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Presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Minorities Division during a research session of the AEJMC National Convention, Memphis, Tennessee, August 1985.

CS209037

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On 31 August 1977, George Samuel Schuyler died quietly at age 82 in New York City Hospital. A smattering of major American newspapers both black and white noted Schuyler's passing with customary obituary page coverage. But, in general, very little editorial attention was paid to the death of an individual who had for over fifty years been one of this country's most prominent black writers. A journalist who once had an audience numbering in the hundreds of thousands, Schuyler died in virtual professional obscurity.

Just as the press paid little attention to Schuyler's death, historians, especially journalism historians, have paid little attention to his life. Several scholars have recently noted this deficit and challenged historians to document Schuyler's journalistic career. For example, in his article "Discovering the Black Press" published in the June 1984 issue of Clio, Pat Washburn specifically noted Schuyler's career as one of six areas of 20th Century black press history which historians should examine.[1] And, in his book which analyses Schuyler as satirist and essayist during the Harlem Renaissance, Michael Peplow also indicated that Schuyler as journalist should be examined.[2]

The appropriateness of this challenge to document Schuyler's journalistic achievements is evident throughout existing critical literature. For example, in a letter to the Secretary of State regarding Schuyler's 1931 Liberia series, Charles Mitchell called

Schuyler "...the most gifted of any Afro-American of this generation."[3] In a 1940's article discussing black press writers, journalist Thomas Sancton described Schuyler as a "...clear and vivid writer...about the best."[4] When evaluating Schuyler's contributions to black press history, scholar Roland Wolseley concluded that Schulyler was "...one of the most able and articulate of the conservative black journalists...whatever one thinks about his social outlook, his writing style and use of irony and wit in making his points mark him as outstanding among black editorialists."[5] Defining his universe of comparison more broadly, H. L. Mencken called Schuyler "...the best columnist of any race now in practise in the United States" in a 1947 letter to Schuyler's employer, the Pittsburgh Courier.[6]

This paper is conceived of as a beginning to the investigation suggested by Washburn and Peplow. Written within a biographical framework, the paper presents an overview of Schuyler's journalistic career. From this documentation of Schuyler's life and career, contexts for additional investigations can be drawn. Questions guiding the inquiry include: What preparation did Schuyler have for his career? What positions within journalism did he hold? What major writing projects did he undertake? What, if anything, was unique or significant about his journalistic endeavors? Traditional historical methodology was employed.

George Samuel Schuyler came to journalism more by accident than by design. The son of middle-class black parents, Schuyler grew up near Syracuse, New York, in a predominately white neighborhood. He was educated in schools where white pupils

overwhelmingly outnumbered black pupils and where there were no black teachers. In his autobiography, Schuyler wrote that while this racial isolation was not detrimental to him, he believed that it would be to most young blacks. He reasoned that young blacks who never saw individuals of their own color in positions of authority or rewarded for professional competence, would be unfairly limited and their self-confidence greatly shaken.[7]

Because Schuyler did not believe that many professional options existed in Syracuse for young black men, he dropped out of high school in 1912 and joined the Army. He was underage, but his mother signed the necessary papers. After basic training, Schuyler served with Company B of the segregated Twenty-fifth U.S. Infantry Regiment based near Seattle, Washington. In November 1912, Company B was transferred to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Schuyler was discharged in mid-July 1915. He remained in Hawaii and began a not particularly successful taxi service.[8] After Schuyler's taxi service failed, he reenlisted. During this second duty tour, Schuyler began writing for publication. Precisely why he did so remains unclear, but Schuyler began writing satirical sketches for a weekly magazine in 1916. Titled The Service, the magazine was produced by civilians for military consumption. The sketches proved popular with readers and the editors kept asking Schuyler for more. Schuyler wrote similar pieces for the Honolulu Commercial Advertiser. Schuyler also produced a typed camp newspaper which he tacked on bulletin boards. He viewed the paper as basically an entertainment vehicle. Because he enjoyed writing

it and because it was well received, he continued to publish the newspaper until he left the service following World War I. At the time of his 1919 discharge, Schuyler was a first lieutenant.[9]

Immediately after his discharge, Schuyler began working as a civil service clerk processing prisoners-of-war in New York City. In his autobiography, Schuyler described these years as a time of serious self-education. After the civil service appointment ended, Schuyler held a series of odd jobs ranging from factory work to dishwashing. He used the free time these jobs gave him to read. He did not write for publication during this time period, but once again, he did carefully observe what was happening around him and those observations formed the basis of essays and columns written later.[10]

Increasingly dissatisfied with his life, Schuyler returned to Syracuse and moved in with two cousins. He found work as a handyman. In his autobiography, Schuyler recalled that while he was dissatisfied with the work itself, he stayed with it because it once again gave him plenty of time to read. Many of the books Schuyler read were about socialism. He joined the Socialist Party of America in November 1921. His party involvement quickly accelerated and he was elected Syracuse chapter education director almost immediately. As part of his job, Schuyler wrote several pamphlets praising socialist principles. Targeted primarily at black readers, these pamphlets were Schuyler's only published writings of this period in his life.[11]

During December 1922, Schuyler returned to New York City in what he later termed an attempt to broaden his horizons. Once again he found temporary employment. He began to question

socialism's basic tenants and began to attend meetings of a variety of black organizations to familiarize himself with their beliefs. After exploring other philosophies for race advancement, Schuyler returned to socialism and became heavily involved with the black socialist group "Friends of Negro Freedom."[12]

Through Schuyler's Friends of Negro Freedom membership came the actual start of his journalism career. Headed by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, the organization published a monthly magazine titled The Messenger. In 1923, Randolph offered Schuyler the job of general assistant on the magazine. Although the salary was only ten dollars a week, Schuyler accepted the job because he liked the idea of being directly associated with what he considered an important publication.[13] Soon after joining the Messenger, Schuyler began writing his first regular column. Initially co-authored with his friend Theophilus Lewis, the column was titled "Shafts and Darts! A Page of Calumny and Satire." In an early column, the two men wrote that their dominant motive was malice and that their intent was "...to slur, lampoon, damn and occasionally praise anybody or anything in the known universe, not excepting the President of the Immortals."[14] To accomplish this goal, the men instituted an award editorially described as a "...handsomely embossed and beautifully lacquered dill pickle" which was awarded to a "notable white or black American who had recently said or done something particularly asinine."[15]

As the column evolved, Schuyler would use the spear much

more frequently than the accolade. Both blacks and whites were the targets of his satirical attacks. For example, in one column called "The Caucasian Problem," Schuyler explained that "given the opportunity we know that a white boy or a white girl can absorb as much knowledge as a colored boy or girl" and that the solution to the problem was really education rather than segregation or extermination.[16] In another column, Schuyler explained that blacks should not automatically assume that they were superior to whites.[17] Schuyler noted that whites did not have the benefit of the African heritage common to blacks and for that reason needed more time to evolve. Schuyler concluded that when whites came to America they were little more than savages and "...it takes time to civilize such poor stock."[17]

At the same time, Schuyler was quick to point out what he believed to be the foibles of his own race. Schuyler persistently attacked products such as hair straighteners and bleaching creams. He equated the use of such products with the loss of the moral self. In one column he noted "As a group we have year buy year been getting lighter and lighter, both as to complexion, morals and brains."[18] Schuyler also frequently pegged his columns around the theme that money corrupts. Within this framework, Schuyler often attacked what he called "the higher mendicancy...gentlemen of color who became experts in the art of extracting coin to save the race."[19]

Those who opposed Schuyler's philosophy were vocal in their responses. Perhaps the most persistent and virulent Schuyler critic was Marcus Garvey. Garvey called Schuyler "...a dangerous Negro to the American People...a defeatist of the worst

kind.. who attacked and mercilessly libelled nearly every honest Negro and Negro movement, seeking to do good for the race in America.[20] In his own publication, The Black Man, Garvey editorialized:

> When we were in America, we helped George S. Schuyler to become known, and that we furnished him with his subjects for his attempted journalism. For several years he could find no other topic to write on of importance, but to discuss us, and in his then rudeness, he said contemptible and rude things that caused us to have thought very little of him as a journalist. When he switched from us, he turned to other public men and movements, and attempted to criticize them in the same way. That was his start in journalism. By abusing other people he became known, but up to now he is still the pretending journalist and ignorant Schuyler. He knows nothing of what is going on, except what he culls from other journalists of intellectual worth.[21]

While other black leaders did not necessarily agree with Schuyler, they did appreciate his writing talent. For example, Langston Hughes wrote of Schuyler's Messenger pieces "Schuyler's editorials, a la Mencken were the most interesting things in the magazine, verbal brickbats that said sometimes one thing, sometimes another, but always vigorously."[22]

Hughes comparison of Schuyler's style with Mencken's is one found frequently within literature which critically considers Schuyler. Harold Cruse in The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, said of Schuyler, "Long known for his cynicism, his satirical and acid comment on Negro affairs, Schuyler earned the title among the literary as the Negro Mencken. Later he was called the Negro Westbrook Pegler."[23] Mencken scholar Charles Scruggs explained the similarities this way: "They were both rationalists

(believing that the clear light of reason made civilization possible); they were both fiercely independent (especially in their dealings with their own); and they were both deeply ambivalent about the value of Negro folkways. Mencken admired Schuyler's frankness, and Schuyler repaid the compliment by imitating Mencken's vigorous colloquial style."[24]

Soon after "Shafts and Darts" began appearing, Schuyler's publication outlets began expanding. For example, in April 1923, The World Tomorrow, a magazine of the Christian Socialist Group Fellowship of Reconciliation, published Schuyler's article, "From Job to Job."[25] Schuyler was pleased that The World Tomorrow recruited his piece which was a first-person account of his earlier day labor experiences because he believed that such publications too infrequently included black writing.[26] The publication of "From Job to Job" established a tendency would characterize Schuyler's entire career: his ability to be published in outlets which normally did not publish black writers.

In 1924, Ira F. Lewis, managing editor of the Pittsburgh Courier, asked Schuyler to write a regular column. The salary was three dollars a week. Schuyler accepted the offer without hesitation. He later recalled that he was delighted to be asked to contribute to the newspaper which at that time had the second largest circulation of the black weeklies.[27] Written in his typical satirical style, Schuyler's first Courier column was called "This Simian World." In one article he pretended to interview the head ape at the local zoo and found that in the ape's view "...it is evident that humanity descended because it

has never shown any evidence of ascending."[28] This rather pessimistic view of man was a theme which ran consistently through Schuyler's second series of Courier columns called "Thrusts and Lunges." In one article of the series, Schuyler again reports a fake interview, this one with a Martian leader explaining why earthlings had not been contacted. The Martian explained that his race had become convinced that man was an underdeveloped race because of such things as "...the enforcement of prohibition, conventions of fraternal organizations, parades of (Garvey's) Universal Negro Improvement Association, the mendacity of American college presidents, a lynching, a Billy Sunday Revival...."[29]

In addition to these heavily satirical pieces, Schuyler produced a series of serious pieces about black history and also regularly reviewed art and literature. In his historical series, Schuyler argued that monuments should be raised throughout the country to individuals such as Sojourner Truth and Paul Laurence Dunbar.[30] In another article he aruged that instead of raising monuments to black soldiers who fought in predominately white wars, monuments should be erected to blacks who fought for themselves. In this context, he noted that between 1526 and 1859, over forty "...insurrections and conspiracies [were] organized by our enslaved forefathers and their friends" and that these individuals should be the subject of monuments because "they organized and often shed their blood and gave their lives on the altar of liberty--FOR THEMSELVES."[31]

As a critic, Schuyler applied a consistent set of standards

and if an author or artist met those standards, then the review would be positive whether or not Schuyler agreed with the author or artist's underlying philosophy. Schuyler scholar Michael Peplow explained Schuyler's critical philosophy this way: "Although sometimes disagreeing with the philosophies of black authors, he [Schuyler] nevertheless wrote positive reviews if they met certain Schuylerian requirements: a good work, he believed must be true to life, grounded in fact, realistic, it must be readable and appeal to the average man as opposed to the 'snobbocracy'; finally, it must truly reflect the black experience."[32] For example, Schuyler praised works by James Weldon Johnson, J.A. Rogers, and Walter White.[33] Although he frequently disagreed in print with W.E.B. Du Bois' philosophy, Schuyler heartily praised Du Bois's The Gift of Black Folk and called the author "our greatest Afroamerican literatus."[34] He said that the work filled "...the breast of every black man, woman and child with a just pride in the fact that they are Negroes."[35] On the other hand, Schuyler attacked Kelly Miller's The Everlasting Stain for being a "middle-of the road" work dominated by a "Tuskegee mentality" and repudiating social equality by "loudly advertising the Negro's loyalty, meakness (sic), and forgiving nature."[35]

In October 1924, Schuyler's longest running column, "Views and Reviews" began appearing in the Courier. In November of the following year, Schuyler was given his first major Courier reporting assignment. The newspaper sent him below the Mason-Dixon line to report on the condition of blacks in the south. From November 1925 until July 1926, Schuyler toured over two

hundred southern communities making observations and interviewing individuals. The Courier promoted the series heavily. After the trip which Schuyler later described as hectic, without incident, and vastly educational, he resumed his dual duties at The Messenger and the Courier. By this time, his career was firmly launched.[36]

One of Schuyler's most controversial pieces was published in The Nation in 1926. Titled "The Negro-Art Hokum," the article was one of Schuyler's major contribution to an ngoing critical debate tied to the Harlem Renaissance. The debate concerned whether black authors should write about racial themes or as an American who happens to be black and deals with more universal themes. Schuyler's basic position was that environment rather than genetics produced art and that black artists should stay within the mainstream. In what critics have termed the most famous passage from the article, Schuyler explained his belief this way:

> ...the Aframerican is merely a lampblacked Anglo-Saxon. If the European immigrant after two or three generations of exposure to our schools, politics, advertising, moral crusades, and restaurants becomes indistinguishable from the mass of Americans of older stock...how much truer must it be of the sons of Ham who have been subjected to what the upliftere call Americanism for the last three hundred years. Aside from his color, which ranges from very dark brown to pink, your American Negro is just plain American.[37]

Schuyler's critics charged that this statement reflected a disloyalty to the race. To the contrary, Schuyler's supporters argued that Schuyler was writing out of intense racial loyalty and

that his main purpose was to assert the humanity common to both black and white Americans and thereby disproving old stereotypes.[38] One of the individuals who supported Schuyler was H.L. Mencken. Writing in the World, Mencken noted that "...the Negroes, despite their generally solemn and humorless mien, do not lack critics of their own race, and some of these critics, notably George S. Schuyler of the Pittsburgh Courier, are extremely realistic...Led by Schuyler aforesaid, a number of young colored intellectuals address themselves to flaying the follies of their people."[39]

That Schuyler had definitely captured Mencken's attention is further evidenced by a letter Schuyler received from Mencken in August 1927. In the letter Mencken asked Schuyler if he had anything in mind for The American Mercury. Mencken described the sort of piece that interested him as follows:

> I mean something done realistically and fearlessly like your excellent stuff in the Pittsburgh Courier. A while back I made some effort to get an article showing how the whites look to an intelligent Negro. Various dark literati of my acquaintance tried their hands at it, but all of them, it seemed to me, missed it. They couldn't get rid of politeness. Does the idea interest you?[40]

Indeed, the idea interested Schuyler and "Our White Folks" appeared in The American Mercury the following December. After the publication of this article, Schuyler became a frequent Mercury contributor. In fact, from the appearance of "Our White Folks" until Mencken left the Mercury editorship in 1934, Schuyler had nine articles published in the Mercury, more than any other single author.[41] Of these articles perhaps the most controversial was "Black America Begins To Doubt." Published in April 1932, the

article developed a theme important to both Mencken and Schuyler: that to become of age intellectually, blacks would have to abandon what the two men believed to be the reactionary teachings of the black churches. Mencken asked Schuyler to write the article as if the abandonment had actually taken place and in a letter to Schuyler suggested that Schuyler's working title, "The Decline of the Negro Church" be retitled "Black America Begins to Doubt." Mencken reasoned that Schuyler's title was "a bit cold and formal."[42] In the article itself, Schuyler credited the black press with contributing to the decline of black church membership and prestige. Schuyler indicated the black press had accomplished this in large part by maturing as information vehicles. In part Schuyler explained, "...today most of the important journals are conducted strictly as business. The church which gives them no advertising has lost its power over the news columns with the rise of Negro business and the increasing patronage of Nordic advertisers."[43]

On 6 January 1928, Schuyler married Josephine Cogdell, the daughter of a prominent white Texas family. Of Josephine, Schuyler later wrote "she was the perfect wife, the perfect companion, the perfect mother..brilliant, adventurous, self-sacrificing, loyal, and courageous."[44] Shortly after their marriage, the Schuylers moved to Chicago, where George edited a weekly magazine insert. Schuyler later explained that the supplement "...went into all of the larger Negro weeklies--this supplement, in order to get better advertising notes, was edited in Chicago and published there. The printers just put the names and titles of the papers on as many thousands of copies as they

used...I think it had about 300,000 circulation combined."[45] However, Schuyler rather quickly realized that he did not like the job and he and Josephine returned to New York where Schuyler continued his work at the Courier and the Messenger until the latter publication's demise in 1928. A prolific writer, Schuyler also accelerated his free-lancing. In August 1930, he taught a two-week newswriting and reporting course to farm and home demonstration agents at South Carolina State College at Orangeburg. He also joined the lecture circuit and travelled thoughout the east and south lecturing about the same topics considered in his writings.

During 1931, Schuyler's first novel, Black No More, was published. Called "the satire of the Harlem Renaissance," "the first full-length satire by a black American writer,"[46] and "the first science fiction novel written by an Afro-American,"[47] Black No More presented the ultimate solution to the race problem: blacks were turned permanently white by a special cream. The novel focused on the reaction of black leaders to this solution as they watched their powers erode as fewer and fewer blacks existed. By the time of Black No More's publication, Schuyler's importance as a writer was evident. W.E.B. Du Bois explained it this way "...George Schuyler, so far, is talking things that most people do not want to hear...One has to read what he says, whether he agrees or not.[48]

In late 1930 came one of the major breaks of Schuyler's career. Publisher George Palmer Putnam called Schuyler and asked him to undertake a secret mission to Liberia. While pretending to

be vacationing, Schuyler was charged with investigating allegations of contemporary slave trade. Schuyler accepted the assignment and arrived in Liberia in late February 1931. For two months, Schuyler travelled extensively thoughout the country interviewing tribal leaders. He found the allegations to be true, but did actual writing while in Liberia because of malaria. After he recovered at home in New York, Schuyler wrote a series of articles based upon his findings. From June through July 1931, the articles ran in four major white newspapers (New York Evening Post, Buffalo Express, Philadelphia Public Ledger, and the Washington Post) and several black newspapers including the Pittsburgh Courier. The articles were eventually syndicated by the Capital News Service. In addition, the New York Evening Post ran Schuyler's photographs of Liberian life with the articles. Schuyler scholar Michael Peplow believes that this series of articled showed Schuyler to be "...a skilled muckraker, one of the band of journalists...who searched out and exposed publicly real or apparent misconduct."[49] Because Schuyler believed the project represented one of the first times a black journalist had served as a foreign correspondent for major white newspapers, he marked the series as one of the highlights of his career.[50] After he completed the newspaper series, Schuyler used his experiences as the basis for a novel promised to Putnam. The resulting work, Slaves Today, has been called the first novel entirely about Africa written by a black American.[51]

By this point in his career, Schuyler was a writer in demand and he did not slow his pace. During 1931, he attacked the International Labor Defense organization's involvement with the

"Scottsboro Boys" case. In his Courier columns and editorials, he repeatedly attacked the ILD as a Communist front organization, the handling of the Scottsboro case, and individuals who supported either. Schuyler also spoke against the proposed black boycotts of white merchants because in part he believed the tactic to be Communist inspired. Writing in the Crisis, Schuyler made his position regarding the boycott technique clear:

> Humanity leaps periodically from one stupidity to another and Afro-americans alas persist in thus demonstrating the essential oneness of mankind. With oafish enthusiasm we have pursued a procession of asininities to the accompaniment of much perspiration, tonsil torturing, resolvings and dime-collecting...far from the realm of reason. Since the Armistice, the Ethiopian temperature has successively risen and fallen over Garveyism, Pan-Africa, Group Economy, Negro Culture, Liberia, the Pacific Movement, Communism, and the New Deal. The latest mental affliction is the economic boycott. It is the worst of all.[52]

Schuyler concluded by asserting that blacks could improve their economic status only by "...intelligent mutual aid in cooperation with white workers."[53]

In addition to being years full of professional accomplishment, there were full years for Schuyler personally. On 2 August 1932, Schuyler's only child Philippa Duke Schuyler was born. A child prodigy, Philippa wrote her first piano composition at age four. Schuyler indicated in his autobiography that Philippa was a major force in his personal development and that his home life with both Josephine and Philippa gave him the confidence he needed to deal with his most severe critics.[54]

In December 1932, Schuyler accepted another undercover investigative reporting assignment. In this instance, the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People asked Schuyler to travel with Roy Wilkins through the south investigating labor conditions on the Mississippi Flood Project. While traveling incognito, Schuyler was arrested after Mississippi police mistook him for an individual involved in a robbery. In his "Reminiscences," Schuyler recalled how the police came into his hotel room with guns drawn, took him to jail, and realizing their mistake the next morning "...took $30, and a Sheffer lifetime pen off of me...and told me to get out of Mississippi and not come back."[55] Schuyler returned to New York and wrote extensively about his experiences for the Courier. Schuyler also went to work part-time in the NAACP's publicity office. One of his projects was an eighteen-article history of the organization which ran in a number of black newspapers.

During the summer of 1935, the Courier sent Schuyler back to Mississippi. For six months Schuyler roamed the state sending back weekly dispatches and photographs of Mississippi life. He also researched a biting piece titled "Freedom of the Press in Mississippi" which ran in the Crisis the following year. Schuyler led the piece with the statement "Walking on eggs without breaking them, treading new snow without leaving tracks...are simple accomplishments compared to editing a newspaper for Negroes in Mississippi."[56] Schuyler concluded that because of the very real threat of mob violence and lynching in the state no freedom of the press for black editors in Mississippi existed and as a result the newspapers were full of bland content "...generally avoiding 9/10's of the real news and practically all of the possible topics crying for comment."[57]

In July 1937, the Courier once again sent Schuyler on a traveling assignment. This assignment was to generate a series of articles about the role of blacks in the labor union movement. Schuyler spent three months traveling to over forty industrial centers. Each week one entire Courier page was dedicated to his findings. These articles have proven to be important documents in the history of black labor. Horace Clayton and George Mitchell quote liberally from them in their 1939 study Black Workers and the New Unions and many of the articles are reprinted in Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis' The Black Worker: A Documentary History of Colonial Times to the Present.[58] The articles are long, analytical pieces written both in first and third person. In one of the stories, Schuyler observed that racial tension was growing because "...Negro labor, a vital factor in the basic and fabricating plants, has turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of embattled white labor and elected to remain loyal to the companies."[59] In a later piece, Schuyler commented upon the birth of the CIO by saying "the coming of the new energetic CIO has been a powerful stimulant to labor organization. Whatever the outcome of its effort, its influence will long be felt in the labor movement."[60] In the series final article, Schuyler advised both the CIO and the AF of L to "...immediately hire a competent Negro familiar with labor problems and with the peculiar problems of Negroes to advise them on race relations, educational work, publicity, and every other means of cementing the bond between white and colored workers and eliminating any shadow of discrimination from the labor movement once and for all. Much greater progress can be made if the two

major labor groups will not take the Negro for granted and will not forget that the 1937 Negro is no fool."[61] Later in 1937, Schuyler became business manager of the Crisis. He remained in that position until spring 1944 when his other work with the Courier became so demanding that he resigned from the Crisis staff.

In June 1939, Schuyler's article "Negroes Reject Communism" appeared in The American Mercury.[62] The appearance of this piece in which Schuyler attacked Communist claims of brotherhood as only hypocritical rhetoric aimed at enlisting black support marked an important point in Schuyler's career because it reflected his philosophical march to the political right. In his autobiography, Schuyler explained the significance of the article as follows: "It was abundantly clear to me that I must devote all of my energies to fighting this conspiracy to destroy the Negro population to ensure a Communist victory. I had one potent weapon--my typewriter."[63] With increasing frequency for the remainder of his life, Schuyler would turn his typewriter to anti-Communist themes until in his final years almost every piece that he wrote or every speech that he gave was conceived within this framework.

From 1939 until the end of World War II, much of Schuyler's editorial attention was directed at the world political situation and its implications for black Americans. Black press historian Lee Finkle perhaps best characterized Schuyler's World War II columns when he wrote "Few newspapermen were as outspoken as Schuyler."[64] Schuyler's outspokenness about the war began with a

1939 Courier article in which Schuyler equated Hitler's treatment of minorities with the treatment of minorities in the world's democracies.[65] Schuyler also strongly expressed the view that a long war would be good for blacks because a long war would weaken white civilization. In one column developing this theme, Schuyler explained "If the white world begins mass suicide, the dark world has but to bide its time, scheme, and at the opportune time, revolt."[66] Schuyler continued to believe that a long war would help blacks even after the United States entered the war. For example, when asked in 1943 by the Crisis to comment upon the long-war-short-war debate, Schuyler wrote that he believed that only a long war would provide the forum necessary for major social reform and that the world was ripe for such reform. Schuyler believed that most blacks agreed with him. Further, a long war would, by practical necessity, end discrimination in both the armed services and in industry.[67] Discrimination in the Army was a topic frequently considered by Schuyler. For example, when angered by repeated physical attacks on Southern-based black troops, Schuyler wrote in September 1941 that if he were to be "radically honest" he would advise black "to refuse military service except under democratic circumstances."[68] Throughout the conflict, Schuyler maintained that the black man's struggle for equality within the United States was a much more important conflict in his own mind than was the armed conflict abroad.[69]

During World War II, Schuyler also became increasingly concerned about the growth of racial intolerance in America. He decided that the best way to combat this intolerance was to educate the white masses with propaganda. To accomplish this

goal, Schuyler founded the Association for Tolerance in America. He devoted much time and energy throughout 1943 developing an ambitious publicity campaign using press releases, transit cards, pamphlets, speeches, and postcards. In all Schuyler either wrote or edited over 30,000 individual pieces for the campaign. However, after only one year the organization dissolved because of a lack of sufficient membership and financial backing.[70]

After the failure of the association Schuyler redirected his energies to the Courier and his anti-Communist crusade. In his Courier columns, Schuyler repeatedly criticized blacks for accepting the Communist line. He also attacked balck leaders whom he believed to be Communist influenced. For example, in 1946, he strongly criticized W.E.B. DuBois for his Communist associations. In particular, Schuyler criticized DuBois for becoming a contributing editor to New Masses. Schuyler wrote in his column, "Agitation is the food and fuel of Communism and all of its organs of propaganda, so when Dr. DuBois joins The New Masses he is more definitely than ever committed to that policy....After all, perhaps it is appropriate that DuBois should join Stalin's literary gendarmerie where inconsistency, backbiting and charlatanism are crowning virtues, and political irregularity is the only vice.[71] Schuyler also used his column to charge that the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America were both Communist front organizations.

In 1945, Schuyler once again engendered considerable controversy when he wrote after Franklin D. Roosevelt's death that while Roosevelt was personally without racial prejudice, he

had been unwilling to make the political sacrifices necessary to combat the racial prejudices in others. While many criticized Schuyler's conclusions, H.L. Mencken supported him. Mencken reprinted the article in the Baltimore Evening Sun and congratulated Schuyler on his intellectual acuteness and moral courage for telling what Mencken also believed to be the truth concerning FDR's racial policies. More specifically, in a letter to Schuyler thanking him for the column, Mencken commented:

> It doesn't surprise me at all to discover that yours is the most intelligent piece on the subject printed in America. The pale face journalists unanimously resorted to crooning and blah. You alone tried to tell the whole and bitter truth. I offer my congratulations on a really first rate piece of work.[72]

During the late 1940's, Schuyler undertook several major Courier reporting assignments. For the first of these assignments, Schuyler visited each state capital in an effort to compare the civil rights picture in each with the picture in the federal capital. Schuyler found his major problem to be finding suitable lodging during his travels and in his stories commented that the vast area from the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast was virtually a no-mans-land for the black traveller. After returning to New York, Schuyler summarized his findings in an article which appeared in The American Mercury. Schuyler found racism to be firmly entrenched throughout the country. However, he did find one noticeable difference between racism in the north and racism in the south:

> People in the North tend to look down on Southerners in the manner of discrimination against the Negro and to pride themselves upon the ...vilized treatment accorded to him in the com...nities north of the Mason & Dixon line. The

> facts, unfortunately, give little cause for condescension or pride...What I have to say is directed primarily at the millions of complacent white folks in the big Northern cities who are totally unaware of any color problem in their midst. The Southerners at least know they have a problem.[73]

Almost immediately after completing the traveling assignment, Schuyler began another assignment in New York. This assignment was to document living conditions in Harlem. Schuyler had lived in or near Harlem for much of his life and believed that the area had been unfairly maligned by the white press. In order to conduct the detailed study he envisioned, Schuyler hired an assistant to help him conduct interviews and gather data. The resulting series, "The Truth About Harlem," ran in the Courier for several months.[74]

When the Harlem series was finished, the Courier sent Schuyler to Latin America to investigate race relations. Schuyler found that racial prejudice and discrimination were widespread throughout the Latin American countries. After he returned to New York, the Courier assigned Schuyler the task of writing a series of articles called "What's Good About The South?" Schuyler once again took to the road and visited fourteen states. In each state, he interviewed one urban and one rural black family about living conditions. Schuyler found living conditions better than he expected them to be and his articles reflected this rather positive view of black southern living. This praise aroused the anger of several black leaders and vigorous discussion of the series and Schuyler's conclusions took place throughout the black press.[75]

In spring 1949, Schuyler covered a meeting on racial

problems in Brazil held in Rio de Janeiro. Schuyler's earlier travels in Brazil had led him to believe that discrimination was widespread. The conference speakers concurred. In his conference reports, Schuyler likened the best situation in Brazil to the worst situation in America. After leaving the meeting, Schuyler toured the West Indies and sent back a series of articles called "The New West Indies." He later commented that one of the most beneficial results of this journey was the number of contacts he made with individuals who later airmailed weekly stories to him from their individual countries. These stories Schuyler edited together to form at least one page each week. Because many black immigrants had come from this region and because few black newspapers covered the region in any depth, the page attracted new readers to the Courier.

Schuyler began a weekly radio program over New York station WLIB in December 1949. Titled "The Negro World," the program prospered and Schuyler remained associated with the station in a variety of capacities until the late 1960's.

In June 1953, Schuyler was a delegate from the United States to the Congress of Cultural Freedom in Berlin. At that conference he gave a speech called "The Negro Question Without Propaganda." The speech was published as part of the Congress' official papers and came to the attention of Congresswoman Frances Bolton. Bolton was so impressed with Schuyler's message that she had the speech inserted into the Congressional Record. The following year, Schuyler condensed the address and rewrote it under the title "The Phantom American

Negro." The article was published in the June 1951 issue of the Freeman magazine. The piece attracted almost immediate attention. Seventeen American and foreign publications, including the Christian Science Monitor, asked for permission to reprint the article. In addition, Reader's Digest reprinted the article the next month and ran the piece in nine foreign editions. The Courier realized the publicity value of the article and reprinted it with a prominent note identifying Schuyler as a staff member. In spite of its popularity, the article was not without its critics for Schuyler's central theme was that the American black was better off than most of the world's blacks and certainly better off than the mythical stereotype presented inmost public forums. Schuyler contended that:

> Actually, the progressive improvement of race relations and the economic rise of the Negro in the US is a flattering example of democracy in action. The most 'exploited' Negroes in Mississippi are better off than the citizens of Russia or her satellites....
>
> Negroes own and publish 150 newspapers and several major magazines with a combined circulation of 3 million. Not a single one has been suppressed, South or North, although they are unsparing in their criticism of racial proscription.[76]

Schuyler's information about the black press was drawn from his history of the black press published as a 7-page monograph by the Courier in 1950.[77] Written as a descriptive narrative, the history praises the black press for the unifying role it has played in black American history. Of particular interest in the study is the attention Schuyler paid to the business side of black newspapers. Schuyler concludes that one of the biggest

dilemmas facing black editors throughout black press history was attracting advertising. The problem was compounded by the fact that until 1930 almost all advertising in the black press was funneled through a white advertising agency which "skimmed off 40 per cent or more commission."[78] Schuyler said that ridding itself of this incumbrance was one of the greatest achievements of black press history. Schuyler completed his study by summarizing the accomplishments of the black press and predicting its future as follows:

> Altogether the Negro press has been a unifying, educational force throughout its history, strengthening the bonds of that freemasonry of color which exists between all westernized Africans. It has lifted the colored people's intellectual horizons and made them aware of their cultural heritage and contemporary progress. It has taught them to not only expect and demand better things but also to prepare themselves to accept the full responsibilities of citizenship in the republic. It will continue to grow in power and influence until it no longer serves any need. That day still seems to be rather distant. If and when it does come, big Negro-owned publishing companies will change with the trend and shift their operations to a broader field. Their publications may die as strictly racial organs only to continue as organs of general circulation.[79]

Schuyler became a columnist for Spadeau Columns when the syndicate was formed in 1953. He was the only black journalist initially asked to be a part of the organization and in his autobiography he indicated that he accepted because of the large audience he anticipated reaching. His column "For The Record," was published by Spadeau for several years. Schuyler used the column for two main purposes. One of these was to expose Communism as was evidenced by his column "Castro's Butcheries Follow Leftist Patterns." The other purpose was to present

black experience to whites in ways that had not been done before. Two of the columns that he believed were particularly important in the latter category were "Negro Education Pays Dividends" and "Growing Souther Negro Votes."[80]

During the late 1950's Schuyler toured five African nations and wrote about his findings in the Courier. He found life in Africa to be primitive at best. He concluded that Africans in general were ravaged by disease, ignorant, and torn by tribal rivalries, and could only be helped by foreign capital and Christian missionaries. Further, he argued strongly that the African nations were not ready for independence and would not be ready for some time.[81]

Schuyler's position on Africa, his relentless attacks on Communism, and his racial attitides which many black leaders viewed as paternalistic at best, strained his relationship with the Courier in the late 1950's. In September 1960, he was removed as editor of the New York edition. Schuyler continued to write columns and editorials for the paper, but the paper began running a content disavowal statement with each article. Also, the newspaper began to reduce Schuyler's salary.[82] In spite of these sanctions, Schuyler did not tone down his writing. He became increasingly critical of the Civil Rights movement which he believed to be Communist inspired and attacked all movement leaders. In his autobiography, Schuyler explained that he believed it was his duty to keep the Courier's readers "...on an even keel during the civil rights hysteria when the Negro press generally surrendered leadership to the professional agitators and their competing mobs vying for larger slices of the available

civil rights dollar."[83]

In November 1961, Schuyler helped found the New York State Conservative Political Association and was that party's unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1964. Schuyler was defeated by incumbent Adam Clayton Powell. Also, in 1961, Schuyler began writing for the John Birch Society's American Opinions. After Schuyler lost the congressional election to Powell, his Courier columns became increasingly critical of virtually every aspect of the Civil Rights Movement. He spoke against all of the marches on Washington, against mob action, against nuisance provocation, and against civil disobedience. Schuyler argued that such tactics would worsen rather than better conditions for blacks. Schuyler also criticized the media for their coverage of the movement. He argued that the media were extremely one-sided in movement coverage and thereby did not fulfill the proper journalistic role.

The extremism of Schuyler's beliefs about the Civil Rights Movement is strongly reflected in an article written for the Courier shortly after Martin Luther King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Schuyler devoted an entire columyn to explaining King's unworthiness for the prize. In part Schuyler argued:

> Neither directly nor indirectly has Dr. King made any contribution to world or even domestic) peace. Methinks the Lenin Prize would have been more appropriate, since it is no mean feat for one so young to acquire 60 Communist front citations...Dr. King's principal contribution to world peace has been to roam the country like some sable Typhoid Mary, infecting the mentally disturbed with perversion of Christian doctrine, and grabbing fat lecture fees from the shallow-pated.[84]

The Courier refused to run the story. However, William Loeb of the Manchester Union Leader agreed to run the column and it was reprinted in other newspapers. Schuyler stopped writing both column and editorials for the Courier, but continued to contribute book reviews and what he called inspirational pieces for the next two years. In 1966, Schuyler's association with the Courier formally ended.

Schuyler became analysis editor and film reviewer for the John Birch weekly Review of the News and literary editor of the Manchester Union Leader during early 1967. On 9 May 1967, Schuyler's daughter Philippa was killed in a helicopter crash in Viet Nam. She had been working in Viet Nam as a war correspondent for the Manchester Union Leader.[85] Two years later on 2 May 1969, Schuyler's wife Josephine died.

After Schuyler's association with the Courier ended, his outlets became increasingly restricted. His portrait was featured on the cover of the conservative American Opinion magazine in May 1970. In a brief article which accompanied the portrait, American Opinion writer Scott Stanley described Schuyler's accomplishments as follows:

> Bridging the decades with integrity and talent, George Schuyler became editor of half a dozen outstanding newspapers and magazines, contributed to the nation's leading journals, traveled the world, was for years syndicated to more than 50 newspapers with a combined circulation in excess of 6 million, authored or contributed to at least 7 books, served nearly two decades as vice president of the American Writers Association and has been impressively listed in each edition of Who's Who in American since 1934.[86]

During the 1970's SDchuyler continued to write and lecture,

but he also became increasingly socially and professionally isolated. This isolation is reflected in a letter written by William Loeb to Michael Peplow. In part Loeb wrote:

> The day of Philippa's funeral saw George as ...[a] composed man. Whatever he felt inside he knew that a gentleman doesn't bare [his feelings] to the rest of the world....Barely a year later [sic], George lost his wife. So, that brave old gentleman is alone, without loved ones to care [for him] as he watches the world going mad. He lives in that apartment, doing the best he can and not becoming bitter but battling on.[87]

The isolation was also reflected in an interview with Schuyler conducted by Ismael Reed and Steve Cannon in October 1972. When asked how he spent his time, Schuyler indicated that he was writing occasional book and film reviews for the Manchester Union Leader and for the Review of the News. But, that he really had very little time to write because he had to do everything for himself. Schuyler explained it this way, "You know, I have very little time because in the first place, except for this boy [John his assistant] here, there's nobody comes here."[88] When asked if he saw many "old-timers'--friends from the 1930o's and 1940's, Schuyler replied simply "No."[89] He died five years later.

For a biographical sketch of Schuyler published four years prior to his death, reporter Hollie West asked a variety of individuals to evaluate Schuyler's career. A former Crisis editor Henry Lee Moon said that Schuyler "...was an iconoclast. He was self-educated, but well educated. He was always worth reading. I often disagree with him....He was not run-of-the-mill. Schuyler was creative."[90] Writer Rayford Logan said Schuyler "could cut deeply and sometimes unfairly, but he was always interesting to read."[91] In his letter to Michael Peplow,

William Loeb said "My impression of George is one of a greatly balanced individual whose judgment and dedication and devotion to principle is so strong that he has no intention of being swayed by praise or criticism."[92] Black historian John Henrik Clark perhaps best explained Schuyler's life: "I used to tell people that George got up in the morning, waited to see which way the world was turning, then struck out in the opposite direction. He was a rebel who enjoyed playing that role."[93]

Summary and Conclusions

For over fifty years, George Samuel Schuyler was one of Americas most productive and controversial journalists. His achievements are many and varied. He was a novelist, a satirist, a columnist, an editor, an organizer, a muckraker, a social critic, a world traveler, an objective reporter, a photographer, an editorial writer, a social historian and an arts critic. During the 1930's and 1940's, he produced a number of important series of articles about race relations in the U.S. and throughout the world. He was one of the first black journalists to publish in many of the predominately white publications and one of the first black journalists to serve officially as a foreign correspondent for them. But, the extremist political views he expressed with increasing conviction during the last years of his life cost him the outlets which had so eagerly awaited his writings in past years.

This research suggests that the challenge to document Schuyler's journalistic career issued by Pat Washburn and Michael Peplow is an important challenge. These findings reinforce the

observations of scholars who have examined more specific aspects of Schuyler's work: Schuyler is, in fact, a significant figure in journalism history. As an overview of his journalistic career, this paper adds a unique chapter to the Schuyler scholarship. However, perhaps especially because the paper is an overview it raises a number of questions which warrant further investigation. Some of these questions come from Schuyler's own writings. For example, the issues raised in Schuyler's article "Freedom of the Press in Mississippi" almost scream for contemporary historical consideration. Other questions regard more specifically Schuyler's career. For example, a theme or value analysis of his writings across time could profitably be done to help shed light on the controversy concerning Schuyler's beliefs concerning race and race advancement. Schuyler's international perspective on human rights issues would also make an interesting study. And since Schuyler spent most of his career making highly controversial comments about volatile social concerns, his career might well be considered within a freedom of expression framework. Schuyler rather consistently seems to have stretched the boundaries of acceptability. He frequently criticized philosophical and political leaders both black and white. He until the 1960o's he was able to do so without significantly limiting his publication outlets. However, during this decade of marked importance to the struggle for racial equality and tolerance, Schuyler's outlets became sharply limited. What was it about the man or about the times (or about both) that brought about this seeming intolerance. A study of this nature could add valuable information to the literature

concerning extra-legal speech and press restraints. Clearly, the length, depth, and nature of Schuyler's journalism career offer rich territory for scholarly exploration.

Endnotes

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[27]Ibid., p. 147.

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[29]George Schuyler, "Thrusts and Lunges," The Pittsburgh Courier, 27 January 1925, p. 16.

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[31]George Schuyler, "Speaking of Monuments and History," The Pittsburgh Courier, 24 April 1926, p. 16.

[32]Peplow, p. 33.

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[41]For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Schuyler and Mencken see Scruggs, pp. 71-77.

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